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ABSTRACT

Informal adult learning opportunities in Wyoming at the turn of the century were offered through popular lectures, newspaper articles, a traveling library, and the University of Wyoming's libraries and museums. Laramie City, one of the earliest towns to be established in Wyoming Territory, was home to a large concentration of formally educated individuals who played a prominent role in the informal education of Wyoming pioneers. In 1886, the University of Wyoming was established. Its faculty's contributions were especially noteworthy in regard to their efforts to ensure that the university library was open to the adult public and that its holdings contained books and journals of general interest and educational value. As important as the contributions of the library to promote informal adult education in Wyoming were the various campus museums established during the period. The museums were open for public visits and inquiries. Through the efforts of the university librarian, adults living in remote areas were able to obtain fictional and nonfictional reading materials by means of a traveling library in 1913. Starting in 1890, university faculty introduced a system of special lectures that were open to all townspeople. Local newspapers played an important role in the educational life of the state during this period. Faculty members wrote numerous popular scientific articles for the local newspapers of Wyoming. (Contains 54 references.) (YLB)

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ACHIEVING COMPETENCE IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD: INFORMAL ADULT EDUCATION ON THE FRONTIER, WYOMING 1867-1916

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Abstract

This historical research project focuses on the role of informal adult learning opportunities in Wyoming at the turn of the century, and is part of a large investigation of adult education on the American frontier during the period 1867-1916. The paper describes adult learning opportunities offered through popular lectures, newspaper articles, a traveling library, and the university of Wyoming libraries and museums.

Purpose

While the overall purpose of this investigation was to determine the informal educational opportunities offered to adults by organizations such as libraries, museums churches, newspapers and various associations on the American frontier research efforts for this project focused on Wyoming Territory. Preliminary findings indicated a need to limit the field of investigation to a smaller area. Laramie City was selected since it was one of the earliest towns to be established and home to a large concentration of formally educated individuals who appeared to have played a prominent role in the informal education of Wyoming pioneers.

Introduction

The first white settlers came to Wyoming in 1853.[1] One of the most potent factors in bringing settlers to Wyoming was the building of the Union Pacific Railroad.[2] Towns

[1] E. E. Baker (1908). *Wyoming School Journal*, 5(3), 53.
[2] I. S. Bartlett (1918). *History of Wyoming*, p. 161. Chicago: Clark Publishing Co.

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started to develop in 1867, and in 1869 a territorial government was established.[3] Between 1880 and statehood in 1890 the population increased from 20,789 to 62,555.[4] In 1886 a university was established.[5] By 1905 the Census showed a population of 101,817--and increase of 9,286 in five years.[6] Between the years 1900 and 1913 the state's railroad mileage nearly doubled and by 1913 Wyoming was rated first in the production of wool, seventh in cattle, ninth in coal and fifth in oil.[7]

Evidence indicates that the education of adults took place through numerous agencies and organizations and in numerous places such as libraries,[8] museums,[9] and churches.[10] Learning opportunities were also offered through traveling libraries,[11] popular educational lectures,[12] articles in local newspapers,[13] agricultural fairs, musical performances, theater productions, art exhibits,[14] professional associations,[15] women's clubs,[16] and commercial groups.[17]

In 1886 the University of Wyoming was established.[18] This was an important event not only in its provision of formal educational opportunities to the people of Wyoming but also in the role its faculty played in the informal education of adults. Their contributions were especially noteworthy in regard to their efforts to a) ensure that the university library was open to the adult public and that its holdings contained books and

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[3]*Cheyenne Daily Leader*, April 17, 1869.
[4]U. S. Census, 1895.
[5]*Daily Boomerang*, August 17, 1886.
[6]*Wyoming School Journal*, 1905).
[7]*Cheyenne State Leader*, Dec. 28, 1913).
[8]Message of Governor Hoyt, Jan. 12, 1882.
[9]Circular of General Information, 1887.
[10]*Laramie Boomerang*, Nov. 7, 1914; Jan. 10, 1915.
[11]*Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, Feb. 1914.
[12]*University of Wyoming Catalogue*, 1892.
[13]*Ingham Collection*, Jun. 15, 1913.
[14]*Cheyenne State Leader*, Oct. 14, 1913; Jan. 9, 1914.
[15]*Laramie Boomerang*, Nov. 21, 1914.
[16]*Cheyenne Daily Leader*, Dec. 12, 1913.
[17]Ingham Collection, Mar. 19, 1909.
[18]*Daily Boomerang*, Aug. 17, 1886

journals of general interest and educational value, b) set up museums open for public visits and inquiries, c) establish and administer a public traveling library, d) prepare and present popular educational lectures for the benefit of the community, and e) write newspaper articles to expand the public's educational horizons.

A Library for the Use of Adults in the Community

In 1882 the governor of Wyoming strongly spoke in favor of the establishment of libraries in the territory. The following is a quote from his message to the Seventh Legislative Assembly:

> The value of a well-furnished library to any community, especially to one yet new, with but few private libraries, is above estimation. To the lover of learning ii is an oasis, bringing refreshment and added strength. To the youth and the citizen of worthy purpose, but with limited range of knowledge, it opens new continents of truth and experience, awakening higher ambitions and aspirations.[19]

Other leading figures in the late eighteen hundreds echoed this feeling, stressing the value of the library as part of the educational system.[20]

When the university opened in September 1887, it had a library--or rather it had a collection of "300 rare and choice books," with which to start a library. These books came as a donation from Hon. Charles E. Clay, a stockman and pioneer of Wyoming.[21] The story was told that President Jefferson had at one time borrowed and read the *Universal History, From the Account of Time*, an eighteen volume set, dated MDCCXLVII, which was part of this collection. The oldest book in the collection was Raleigh's *History of the World*, a large sheep-bound volume, 13 by 9 inches, and was dated 1652.[22]

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[19] *Message of Governor Hoyt to the Seventh Legislative Assembly*, Jan. 12, 1882, p. 24.

[20] J. C. Dana. (1896). American Library Association Primer. *Public Libraries, 1*(1), 5-10.

See also: R. C. Morris. (1897). *Collections of the Wyoming Historical Society*, Cheyenne, Wyoming: The Wyoming Historical Society.

[21] *The Chronicles of the Alumni of the University of Wyoming*: A souvenir Published in Honor of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary and Reunion, June 1911. Box 1, Aven Nelson Collection, University of Wyoming Archives, American Heritage Center.

See also: *Laramie Weekly Sentinel*, April 10. 1888.

[22] The Chronicles of the Alumni of the University of Wyoming, *loc. cit.*

Concerned about the learning opportunities offered to adults in the community, it was decided that the library should be open every week day and that it "may be consulted by all persons, whether connected with the university or not."[23] Unfortunately no statistics could be found on library attendance, numbers of books withdrawn, or the type of books read before 1916. Prominence was given to it in the *Catalogues* and in annual reports, however, and evidence showed a rapid increase of its holdings.

According to an 1895 annual report patrons of the library had an amazing number of well-known scientific and general periodicals at their disposal: Some of these were:[24]

Agricultural Science
American Chemical Journal
American Gardening
American Geologist
Botanical Gazette
CenturyCosmopolitan
Educational Review Review
Engineering Magazine
Independent
Journal of the Chemical Society
Microscope
Mining and Scientific Press
American Machinist
American Naturalist
American Journal of Science
American Journal of Civics
Bulletins of the Torrey Botanical Club
Colliery Mining Magazine
Electrical World
Forum
Harper's Monthly
Literary Digest
Microscopical Journal
North American Review

In 1904 this list was further expanded to include a number of general interest, hobby and career related magazines:[25]

American Blacksmith
Association Men
Boston Cooking School Magazine
Floral Life
Ladies' Home Journal
Poet Lore
Stenographer
Army and Navy Journal
Bookman
Country Life in America
Florists' Exchange
McClure's Magazine
Phonographic Magazine
Typewriter and Phonographic World

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[23] *Ibid.*, 1890-1891, p. 86.

[24] Wyoming Agricultural College, *Fifth Annual Report*, 1895, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-27.

[26] The *University Melange*, Catalogue Number, 1904-1905, 1(3), 28-29.

[27] *Fifth Annual Report of the Board of Trustees to The Governor of Wyoming*, 1896, "forty-nine agricultural papers from different States," p. 81, Box 232, President's Office, University of Wyoming Archives, American Heritage Center

In addition to this list of popular and scientific periodicals, a large number of agricultural newspapers papers from at least 24 territories or states, were also available for readers interested to further their knowledge about agriculture.[26]

The motto of the University Library was "The worth of a book is in its use."[27] In 1904 a new feature in the form of a reading guide for patrons was introduced. A shelf, labeled "Books we Aught to Read," was installed in the reading room where it could be browsed through or taken out at students' convenience.[28]

Museums: A Visual Method of Adult Education

As important as the contributions of a library to promote informal adult education in Wyoming were the various campus museums established during the period under review.

At that time the idea of educational exhibits was only a few years old in the United States. The first educational exhibits in America date from about 1870. Science exhibits appeared on the scene during the late seventies and mammal and bird exhibits during the eighties.[29] The acquisition, preservation, and use of objects is, however, one of the oldest forms of education in the world.[30] "They exist to give enjoyment to those who seek enjoyment and to give opportunity to study for those who seek knowledge."[31] According to Adam[32] the strongest feature of this visual method of education was it's power to synthesize basic facts into a dramatic presentation of unity, using objects to convey

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[27] *The University Melange*, Catalogue 1904-1905, 1(2), 15.

[28] The Editor. The University Library. *The University Melange*, 1904, 1(2), 15.

[29] D. Rowden. (1934). *Handbook of Adult Education in the United States*, p. 105. New York: American Association of Adult Education.
See also: W. E. Howe. (1913). *A History of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, p. 199. New York: Gillis Press

[30] Paul M. Rea. (1930). What are Museums for? *Journal of Adult Education*, June, 2: 265

[31] I.V.Coleman (1927). *Manual for Small Museums*, p. 12. New York: Putnam and sons.

[32] R. Adam. (1939). *The Museum and Popular Culture*, p. 33. New York: American Association of Adult Education.

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impressions through the eye.[33] He believed that museums usually flourish in communities where there is a strong tendency towards the popularization of education and a general interest in cultural growth, as was the case in Wyoming. Faculty members believed that "a museum would not only serve a very necessary purpose in aid of instruction, but also prove to be a great public benefit by way of illustrating the resources of the Territory."[34]

In 1890 it was announced that a museum was "now being fitted up with beautiful cases" in which Professor Conley, of the Geology Department, was placing his "choice private collection of fossils, minerals, and Indian and Mound-builders' relics." The result of over twenty years collecting this collection was regarded as one of the best in the West, "having enough of the typical fossils of each geological age and epoch to awaken an interest and stimulate enthusiasm".[35]

During the summers of 1892 and 1893, faculty members went out into the state to collect specimens of natural products such as native grasses, coal, oil, and ores to be "arranged so visitors can see at a glance our economic resources."[36] In 1895 over five tons of saurian bones, a series of fossils, representative rocks, flora of the state and skins for the mounting of large mammalia were collected.[37] By 1896 the Museum of Geology and Paleontology collection consisted of 7,000 specimens, of which nine-tenths had been gathered during the previous three years.[38] During this time the Agricultural Museum was also expanding and it was reported that their collection consisted of specimens of the cultivated crops and wild grasses of Wyoming, and rare seeds from Africa, Japan, and

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[33]L. V. Coleman. (1927). *Manual for Small Museums,* p. 12. New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons.

[34]Typescript of the Report of the Board of Trustees to Governor Francis E. Warren for the 2 years ending Dec. 10, 1889, *op. cit.* p. 20.

[35]*The University of Wyoming Catalogue,* 1890-1891, p. 85.

[36]*Ibid., 1892-1893, p. 73.*

[37]*Ibid.*, 1895-1896, p. 83.

[38]*Ibid.*, 1896-1897, p. 123.

*Seventh Annual Report of the President of the Board of Trustees to the Governor of Wyoming,*1898, Box 232, President's Office. University of Wyoming Archives.

other foreign countries. Work had also begun on reproducing the fruit of the state in wax to make it possible to have an exhibition in permanent form.[39]

In 1897 it was reported that the Herbarium contained about 16,000 specimens and that it was becoming "more and more of interest to those "who desire to make a special study of the plants of this range."[40]

By 1904 the collection had grown to 46,000 specimens of plants -- the largest and most representative of Rocky Mountain flora in Western America. There was also an excellent collection of insects and bird skins. At this time members of the community were once again invited to come and look at these exhibits, and to ask for information whenever needed. In 1912 the *Rock Springs Rocket* reported that the frame work of a giant dinosaur had been dug up in a quarry near Rock Springs,[41] and the *WYO* stated that this was the largest dinosaur known. One single limb bone was six feet five and a half inches long and weighed 1,400 pounds.[42]

Over the years various persons donated collections which included a collection of South American insects, reptiles, sea shells, a large meteorite, a collection of Indian weapons and old fire-arms. All the museums were expanding at a steady rate, materials being continually added until the end of the period under review.[43]

A Traveling Library to Fill the Needs of Rural Adults

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[39] *The University of Wyoming Catalogue.*, 1897-1898, p. 25.
Ibid., 1899-1900, p. 29.
The Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Trustees to the Governor of Wyoming, 1900, p. 29 Box 232, President's Office, American Heritage Center.

[40] *Ibid.*, 1899-1900, p. 28.

[41] *Ibid.*, 1899-1900.

[42] *The WYO*, vol. 3, 1912.

[43] *Ibid.*, 1918, pp. 27-28.

Through the efforts of the university librarian, adults living in remote areas were able to obtain fictional and non fictional reading materials by means of a traveling library in 1913. Composed of sets of twenty to twenty-five books, small libraries were mailed to any part of the state free of charge, except for the transportation costs.[44] The intention was to send out books upon request,

> which may be of benefit to cities and rural communities - books which may be authority on any special subject - and thus at the least cost to the readers, make it possible to secure the best literature for inspiration, recreation and technical information, with the attempt to meet the needs of all of the people of a small community.[45]

These boxes of books weighed approximately fifty pounds and were usually mailed by parcel post. Persons in remote areas were thus able to obtain reading materials at the cost of one dollar and fifty cents for the use of twenty books for a period of two months.[46] In 1913 the *Cheyenne State Leader* announced that "various sets of books which have been arranged for the several traveling libraries will be shipped throughout the state," and promised its readers that "excellent reading matter will soon be within reach of the uttermost remote communities.[47] It was further noted that the libraries will consist of "a number of specially selected volumes chosen with reference to the readers into which hands they will probably come," and will deal with subjects such as travel, agriculture, domestic science, fiction, biography, and science. One person in the community was to assume responsibility for its distribution and its collection after a period of two months. Books were packed in sturdy wooden boxes with hinged doors and dividing shelves. In describing the contents, the *Wyoming Farm Bulletin* listed books for:

> the man who enjoys biography, travel; for the woman who finds restful moments in"best sellers"; and from the ambitious who seeks for technical information. No one is forgotten, for in the two hundred books are to be found those of Agriculture, Education, Domestic Science, Animal Industry, Science, History, Exploration,

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[44] *University of Wyoming Catalogue*, 1917.

[45] *The Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, Feb., 1914, 3(8), 115-116.

[46] [138] The Wyoming Farm Bulletin, Feb., 1914, 3(8), *loc. cit.*

[47] *Cheyenne State Leader*, Dec. 13, 1913.

Eugenics, Fiction, Poetry, Sociology, Animal Life, Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Biography, and books on Public Affairs.[48]

In her annual report, Grace Hebard stated that ten small traveling libraries had been placed in circulation and that they were "greatly appreciated." She urgently recommended that more of "these libraries be established and more books be placed in each one." Adults were able to select "the character of literature they desire by requesting advance slips giving the names of the various books in the libraries."[49] By 1916 the librarian reported that fourteen boxes had been placed in circulation and that the average number of borrowers of a library were 20 persons.[50] The traveling library system appeared to have made an important contribution to informal adult education. There is no doubt that this service had filled a real need since the librarian regularly reported that the demand for libraries was exceeding the supply.

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[48] *Ibid*

[49] *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the President*, April 18, 1914. Box 1, Hebard Collection, University of Wyoming Archives, American Heritage Center.
Laramie Daily Boomerang, Jan. 19, 1915.

[50] *Report of the Librarian to the President*, 1916. Box 1, Hebard Collection, University of Wyoming Archives, American Heritage Center.

Informal Adult Learning Through Popular Educational Lectures

Starting in 1890 university faculty introduced a system of Special Lectures which were open to all townspeople.[51] Judging from the topics discussed over a period of five years, these lectures had a high educational value, and could not be categorized as light educational entertainment. An overview of the list of presentations given during the period 1891-1895,[52] bears testimony to the quality of efforts to broaden the minds and outlook of the members of the community.

December 18: "Middle Ages" - Rt. Rev. Bishop Burke

February 2: "Louis Agassiz" - Prof. A. J. Cooke

February 26: "University Extension: Its Relation to Higher Education" - A. A. Johnson

March 11: "Water" (scientific) - Prof. J. D. Conley

April 8: "Old Concord in Literature and History" - Prof. Wm. I. Smith

April 19: "Gladstone" - Rt. Rev. Bishop Talbot

May 13: "Outlines of Primitive Belief" - Prof. J. F. Soule

June 10: "Civics" - Prof. A. M. Sawin

The year 1892-1893 produced the following topics:[53]

"Revelations of the Microscope" - Prof. Aven Nelson

"Socrates" - Rev. John Leal

"Chemistry of the Human Body" - Prof. E. E. Slossen

"The French Revolution" - Chancellor W. F. McDowell

"Switzerland and the Swiss People" - Prof. Henry Merz

"Evolution" - Rev. John E. Sulger

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[51] Alice Ringert. (Date unknown). *Typescript on the Territorial University*. p. 21. Box 231, President's Office, University of Wyoming Archives, American Heritage Center.

[52] *The University of Wyoming Catalogue*, 1892-1893.

[53] *Ibid.*, 1893-1894.

"The Engineer as a Factor in Civilization" - Prof. L. C. Colburn

"Industry vs. Genius" - Hon. C. C. Hamlin.

Newspaper Articles: A Learning Opportunity

Local newspapers played an important role in the educational life of the state before and after the turn of the century, an its function as a tool of adult education was well realized. Faculty members wrote numerous popular scientific-articles for the local newspapers of Wyoming. In an article that appeared in a 1909 *Wyoming School Journal*, professor Buckle described the newspaper as,

> an instrument of real culture to thousands, a sharpener of the understanding, a substitute for travel and the college, an efficient and cheap means of diffusing the learning and skill and courtesy of the few to become a possession of the many.[54]

He added that nearly all the education of some men had been obtained through the daily and weekly newspapers, and that "some have seemed to made good for past disadvantages, so much have they acquired by this means."[55] Topics related to agriculture, mining, and geology provided the bulk of the popular-scientific articles submitted by faculty members to local newspapers. In many cases these articles were brief, popular summaries of investigations that the university had done. Not only did department heads encourage faculty members to write short press bulletins on the various aspects of their work at the university, but editors of newspapers actively sought such articles. The following is an excerpt from a letter of Herman H. Knabe, Editor of the *Medicine Bow Times*:

> I would gladly pay something for any news you can send up. Local news, such a personal paragraphs are not of sufficient interest to *Times* readers to be published, but articles of educational value, will be appreciated. Anything which will boost the resources and the educational institutions of the State are of great value, and will be glad to publish same.[56]

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[54] *Wyoming School Journal*, Feb. 1909, 5(6), 161.

[55] *Ibid.*

[56] *Typescript of a letter from Editor Hermann Knabe of the Medicine Bow Times, to Mr. W. S. Ingham of Laramie*, June 15, 1913. B-In4 w5, Manuscript Files, W. S. Ingham Collection, University of Wyoming Archives, American Heritage Center.

Examples of the type of articles sent to newspapers can be found in Director Elmer Smiley's 1901 Report:[57]

Turkeys in Wyoming.

What is the Maintenance Ratio for a Horse?

Results of Lamb Feeding at the Wyoming Experiment Station.

Feeding Value of Wheat.

The Management and Improvement of the Range.

Alfalfa.

What Ails the Chickens?

Alfalfa versus Wheat Bran for Milch Cows.

Maintenance Ration for a Driving Horse.

External Parasites of Sheep

Some of the newspapers gave a regular space to faculty members each week "making it a distinct department."[58] Considering popular scientific newspaper articles as of "great educational value," Professor Knight reported in 1913 that more press bulletins had been published during that year than "any other year" in the history of the University.[59] The agronomist at the university reported in 1916 that he had written many articles for newspapers, often on request.[60]

In addition to the above mentioned articles, librarian, Dr. Hebard, herself an author of numerous books,[61] often submitted book reviews to the newspapers to serve as a reading guide to adults in the state. Some of the books she reviewed were: *James Bridger,*

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[57] *Twelfth Annual Report*, 1901-1902, p. 52.

[58] *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Wyoming Experiment Station*, 1913-1914, p. 135.

[59] *Twenty-Third Annual Report of the Wyoming Experiment Station*, 1912-1913.

[60] *Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the Wyoming Experiment Station*, 1915-1916.

[61] *Newspaper clipping*. Faithful Services Recognized by Medal Awarded to Hebard (1929). Box 35, Personal files of Grace Hebard, University of Wyoming Archives, American Heritage Center.

Trapper Frontier Man, Scout, and Guide, by J. Cecil Alter; *Trails of Yesterday*, by John Bratt; *Shoshone Folklore*, by Sara F. Olden; *The Iron Trail*, by Edward Gillette; *William Clayton's Journal*, by Clayton Family Association; *We Must March*, by Honore Morrow; *The Song of the Indian Wars*, by John G. Neihardt; and *The Great Plains*, by Walter P. Webb.[62]

In summary, the writing of popular scientific articles for newspapers was an efficient and inexpensive means of diffusing learning among the general population. Realizing that it represented a way to reach many adults faculty members submitted articles describing their work and findings in popular, easy understandable language, to the newspapers of Wyoming. In addition to these numerous book reviews guided and stimulated adults to read some of the better literature of that time.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this study will contribute towards the broadening of historical foundations of adult education in the United States. Further research is needed to determine what the role was of the many other agencies and organizations that were involved in the provision of adult learning opportunities at the turn of the century.

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